

## INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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### USE OF CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

When is it advisable for a city to create citizen advisory committees? How can such committees best serve the purpose of democratic local government?

Many cities during recent years have created special citizen committees to advise the city council or chief administrator on specific problems or to develop public understanding and support for proposed projects such as capital improvements or charter amendments. They normally are appointed for a single purpose and are automatically discharged when their work is completed. In addition to being temporary, they are generally "semi-official" in that they are not provided for by charter or ordinance and have none of the powers or responsibilities which permanent boards and commissions possess. They are created by resolution or informal agreement between the council and the administrator and are known as temporary advisory committees.

The informal, semi-official nature of these committees and their temporary status are the two features which distinguish them from regular, permanent advisory boards and commissions. Permanent advisory bodies are appointed for fixed terms and their activities are generally limited to specific functions such as recreation, parks, or library, although in some instances they may be general advisory bodies. The special citizen committee on the other hand is appointed for a limited period to study a specific problem.

This report on citizen advisory committees appointed to study a specific problem is based on the experience of 26 cities ranging in population from 4,000 to over 500,000. These 26 cities are Beverly Hills, Riverside, San Diego, San Jose, Santa Rosa, and Whittier, Calif.; Boulder, Colo.; Hartford, Conn.; Ocala, Fla.; Albany, Ga.; Worcester, Mass.; Berkley, Clawson, Flint and Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.; Southern Pines, N. C.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Baker and The Dalles, Ore.; Columbia, S. C.; Lubbock, Tex.; Alexandria, Arlington County, and South Boston, Va.; Vancouver, Wash.; and Watertown, Wis. A summary of the use of citizen advisory committees in these cities is shown in a table on page 995 of this report.

### The Role of Citizen Committees

While in the period after the Civil War it was common practice to appoint citizen boards to administer municipal services, the trend of the past half-century has been to centralize policy formation in a small elected council and administration in a strong chief executive. Independent boards and commissions with administrative powers over libraries, public health, recreation or utilities have been giving way to integrated departmental operation, with a resulting increase in efficiency but a corresponding decline in citizen participation.

The full effects of this tendency may not yet be widely apparent, but city councils and administrators must ultimately recognize the need for continuous citizen support and take steps to promote it. Officials in a number of cities have



already done so. While reluctant to reestablish permanent administrative boards and commissions because of their splintering effect on local government, they are regaining citizen participation by means of the temporary advisory committee.

These groups can play several different roles, from providing technical advice to promoting specific projects in the community at large. Among the proposals that have been given them for study are such diverse ones as improvement bonds, off-street parking, charter amendments, civic centers, and street lighting. The appendix to this report gives all the purposes of citizen advisory committees reported by the 26 cities listed herein.

Guide to Public Opinion. A committee of citizens representing a cross-section of interest and views in the community can effectively aid municipal officials. As an indicator of public opinion the committee can serve as a guidepost in the development of public and administrative policies. The reaction of the committee to a proposed program will serve to guide municipal officials in devising programs that are feasible from the standpoint of acceptance by citizens and yet are still in the best interests of the community.

In Columbia, S. C., a large committee was appointed to discuss a plan developed by the city to undertake extensive improvements in the water plant and to finance these improvements with increases in the water rates. The committee, which met only once, recognized the need for the plan and recommended that the city go ahead with the program. After receiving committee approval, the city then announced the program to the public.

Promotion. A citizen committee can be useful in promotion in two ways: (1) it may devise and actively direct a program to secure approval of citizens for some project, and (2) the individual citizen members of the committees may promote a program or project through their everyday personal contacts. The committee can aid the community to obtain a better understanding of city problems and the reasons for specific programs and actions. A citizen not officially connected with the administration is an excellent public relations agent in convincing other citizens and friends of the desirability of a certain program.

Beverly Hills, Calif. (29,000), for example, began modernizing its street lighting system following the work of a citizen committee which circulated petitions among property owners to authorize the city to go ahead with the program. The committee was successful in securing approval on all business streets and later concentrated in residential areas. Flint, Mich. (163,143), utilized a citizen committee to direct a program to inform the community of the need for a new city hall. Its program was successful, and voters approved a \$5,000,000 bond issue for construction of new municipal buildings.

Technical Knowledge and Advice. Another important use of the citizen committee is to supplement the technical knowledge of municipal officials through the appointment of technical and professional citizens to the committee. This method provides the city the advice, experience, and training of professional citizens without the cost of consultants' fees, although such committees may ultimately recommend engaging a consulting firm. Problems assigned to these committees need not be of community-wide interest and may involve administrative rather than policy decisions.

The function of the technical expert committee may be of greatest benefit to smaller cities, but large cities too can utilize citizens who possess special capacities to study specific problems. Alexandria, Va. (61,787), appointed a committee



(Note: Code for appointment of committee and selection of committee chairman: M--mayor; C--city council; Mgr--city manager; Co--county board; Comm--committee members. Code for authority for establishing committee: A--motion of city council; Ch--authority by city charter; R--city council resolution; O--city ordinance.)

City and Population (in thousands)	No. of Advis. Comms.	By Whom Aptd.	Author- ity for Estab. Comm.	Who Selects Comm. Chmn.	No. Comm. Mems.	City Officials Serve Ex- Officio?	Dura- tion of Comm. (mos.)	Did City Provide Funds?	Did City Provide Staff?
Beverly Hills, Calif. 29..	16	M	A	M	3-15	No	...	No	Yes
Riverside, Calif. 56.....	7	M,C	Ch	M,C	8-9	Yes	3	Yes	Yes
San Diego, Calif. 435.....	6	M,Mgr	Ch	(a)	5-20	No	6-24	No	Yes
San Jose, Calif. 102.....	1	Mgr	R	Comm	30	Yes	24	No	Yes
Santa Rosa, Calif. 18.....	4	M	Ch	Comm	5	Yes	...	Yes	Yes
Whittier, Calif. 29.....	2	M,C	Ch	Comm	5-7	Yes	3-11	Yes	Yes
Boulder, Colo. 20.....	2	M	A	M	20	Yes	1-6	No	Yes
Hartford, Conn. 177.....	2	M,Mgr	...	...	...	Yes	2-12	Yes	Yes
Ocala, Fla. 12.....	1	C	A	Comm	65	No	12	Yes	Yes
Albany, Ga. 31.....	1	M	Ch	Comm	7	No	...	No	Yes
Worcester, Mass. 203.....	2	Mgr	None	Mgr	3-5	Yes	1-6	No	Yes
Berkeley, Mich. 18.....	1	C	R	Comm	3	No	18	Yes	Yes
Clawson, Mich. 5.....	2	M	R	M	7-11	No	1-24	Yes	Yes
Flint, Mich. 163.....	4	M	Ch	M	7	Yes	...	No	No
Grosse Pte Woods, Mich. 10	2	C	R	C	6-8	No	6-12	No	No
Southern Pines, N.C. 4....	2	C	R	C	3-5	No	1-10	No	Yes
Cincinnati, Ohio 504.....	4	C	R	Comm	3-11	No	3-18	No (b)	No
Baker, Ore. 9.....	1	C	Ch	Comm	5	Yes	3	No	Yes
The Dalles, Ore. 7.....	2	M	Ch	Comm	5-8	Yes	16	No	Yes
Columbia, S.C. 87.....	6	M	None	M,Comm	3-40	No	1-12	Yes	Yes
Lubbock, Tex. 72.....	2	C	Ch	C,Comm	35-250	No	2	Yes	Yes
Alexandria, Va. 62.....	5	M	R	Comm	7	No	8-24	Yes	Yes
Arlington County, Va. 135.	7	Co	...	Comm	5-7	Yes	3	No	Yes
South Boston, Va. 6.....	1	M	O	Comm	9	Yes	1	Yes	Yes
Vancouver, Wash. 41.....	2	M	R	Comm	12	Yes	6	No	Yes
Watertown, Wis. 12.....	2	Mgr	...	Mgr	3-5	No	3-8	No	No

(a) Chairman appointed by committee members, mayor, or city manager; (b) Funds (\$1,500) provided for one committee.



to draft a revised building code. Citizens with technical knowledge of building construction were appointed and provided the city with technical competence at no cost.

### Cautions in Use of Citizen Committees

The use of citizen advisory committees has not met with uniform success and in some cities committees have failed to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. Most failure can be traced to the city itself through indiscriminate use of committees, poor appointments, failing to provide proper assistance, or failing to define committee responsibilities and the problem they are to deal with.

Government by Committee. One pitfall in the use of the citizen committee is the tendency to rely on the committee in too many instances. If a fault of the administrator, it weakens his decision-making ability and may undermine his influence with the council; if a practice of the council, it indicates unwillingness to accept the responsibility for which its members were elected. Either case creates the danger of "government by committee," to fill the vacuum created when the city council and/or the chief administrator abandon their responsibilities.

The tendency to multiply the number of committees may be particularly strong when one committee makes an outstanding contribution to the community. The creation of such advisory bodies is an easy way to escape controversial decisions, and rather than accept its responsibility a city council may degenerate into a manufacturer of committees. Ultimately the council may find itself confronted with a multitude of committees, both temporary and permanent, which render decisions virtually impossible. The focal points of both legislative and administrative responsibility and authority are then lost.

In theory, citizen committees are appointed as advisory bodies with neither policy making nor administrative powers. In practice they may acquire both, especially when regular city officials choose not to exercise their responsibility and authority.

In describing citizen committees, one city official stated, "Legislative is a better description than the appellation advisory." This can be true. A city council may be reluctant to act contrary to committee findings since it can shift the responsibility to the committee if the findings are proved wrong. Conversely, the council may not have the courage to face the possibility of the recrimination which might result if the committee's findings are disregarded and subsequent experience proves them right.

While many cities have recognized the value of citizen committees, most recommend that committees be used only for major programs and projects rather than for every problem which arises. In one city which has a permanent advisory committee, 20 subcommittees were appointed by the chairman to study different problems. In the great majority of the cases the city council adopted ordinances to carry out the recommendations of the committees. This practice approaches "government by committee" as well as by ordinance. Councils should avoid adopting ordinances unless they can also be certain of continuing means of enforcement, and ordinances which merely reassert mores are probably unnecessary.

City councils should also assume their responsibility to govern as the representatives of the electorate and refer only major problems to citizen committees.



Misusing Citizen Committees. A city should appoint a citizen committee only when it has sincere motives to solve a problem on the basis of the committee findings and recommendations. A committee should not be appointed with the expectation that it will study a problem and arrive at a solution already determined by the appointing authority. At the same time, it is perfectly proper to present a committee with completed staff work for approval and support or for modification.

Citizens serving on committees do so at no compensation and often at considerable inconvenience to themselves. City officials, who attempt to use the committee for devious means not only thwart the purpose of the citizen committee but also endanger the success of both the program and the administration by alienating a group of influential citizens.

It should not be assumed that a committee will necessarily see a problem in the same light as the city officials. If committee recommendations are inconsistent with the predetermined course of action, the appointing authority must reject the committee report at the risk of incurring unfavorable reactions from committee members and the community. Such a practice not only wastes the time of city officials and committee members but also jeopardizes the future use of citizen committees.

#### Types of Advisory Committees

Cities have created special citizen advisory committees for two basic purposes: (1) fact-finding and advice, to aid the city council or administrator in arriving at a solution to a specific problem, and (2) public relations, to gain community-wide support for a specific city program or activity. Some cities have appointed committees to serve both of these purposes; that is, to study a problem and recommend a solution while at the same time acquainting the community with the information needed for intelligent citizen support when city officials finally request it.

The Fact-Finding Committee. Cities appoint fact-finding committees to study controversial problems of community-wide interest or to provide technical advice on a problem. In both cases the final decision of the appointing authority is likely to follow the recommendations of the committee, or at least to be based to a great extent on its findings.

In South Boston, Va. (6,057), the city council encountered considerable opposition when it proposed to pay for the cost of new sanitary sewer installations by special assessment. The issue aroused such heated discussion in the community that the council decided to refer the question to a citizen committee. The committee conducted a study of the problem and recommended the same special assessment method which the city council had proposed. The result was that the council adopted the special assessment method with little public opposition.

Controversial ordinances were adopted in two cities as a result of studies conducted by citizen committees. In Columbia, S. C. (86,914), a controversy arose over the need for a housing ordinance. A citizen committee was appointed to determine if there was a need, and if so to draft a suggested ordinance. Following a two-month study the committee submitted a recommended ordinance, and after a heated public hearing the city council adopted the ordinance in the exact form recommended. In The Dalles, Ore. (7,676), a citizen committee was appointed to suggest the outline of an ordinance to license and regulate peddlers, itinerant merchants, and canvassers, and the council closely followed committee recommendations in adopting the ordinance.



Watertown, Wis. (12,417), organized a committee to conduct interviews and to recommend a firm of engineers to design a new sewage disposal plant. The committee recommended three alternative firms, one of which was accepted by the city council. Watertown also appointed a committee to select the design and site of a new band shell and followed the recommendations of the committee in every instance.

The Public Relations Committee. Citizen advisory committees have been used by cities as a public relations device, to acquaint the community with the needs of the city, and to gain citizen support for programs, especially when these must be submitted to the voters in referendums.

In Lubbock, Tex. (71,747), a 250-member committee was appointed in 1952 to study the need for a proposed \$6,000,000 public works bond issue, after a similar plan had been highly successful in 1950. The large committee was organized into more than 15 subcommittees to study various aspects of the proposed issue in detail and to determine the merits and adequacy of each aspect. All phases of the program received committee approval, and its recommendations formed the basis of the city's publicity campaign. In addition to explaining the need for the bond issue, the city was able to point to the support and approval which the program had already received from the large citizen group.

Boulder, Colo. (19,999), also obtained approval of a bond issue through the aid of a citizen committee which helped publicize the need for immediate improvements in the water utility and the feasibility of borrowing the money.

Hartford, Conn. (177,397), used an advisory committee as a public relations agency, to formulate an education program for a new waste collection system which was being placed into effect. Seven citizens representing the advertising club, newspapers, and radio stations collaborated with officials of the health and public works departments in organizing the program. The city followed the recommended program of the committee and the transition from the old system of separate garbage collection to the new system of combined collection was made with a minimum of confusion.

Several cities have obtained excellent results with citizen committees designed to serve in both an advisory and a public relations capacity. This type of committee is asked to study a problem and suggest solutions to the appointing authority, but its function is considered to be much broader. The committee becomes thoroughly familiar with problems and their implications and can relay this information to a larger group of citizens. This will enable the city to gain support for programs and to reduce to some extent the criticism of those opposed.

Whittier, Calif. (29,265), and Cincinnati (503,998), used citizen committees as a means of securing amendments to their city charters. The committees studied the need for charter revision and submitted proposed changes to the city councils which adopted them and referred them to referendums. Both committees played an active role in the election campaigns, and their efforts were largely responsible for approval of the proposals in both cities.

Riverside, Calif. (56,571), used seven citizen advisory committees to develop a long-range capital improvement program. The committees were identified as civic center, utility, parking and transportation, public health and safety, public works, airports, and parks, trees and recreation. They conducted comprehensive studies and submitted recommendations in a preliminary report to the city council. The seven committees were then disbanded and a coordinating committee, composed of the



seven councilmen and one citizen from each of the seven original committees, was appointed with the mayor acting as chairman.

The coordinating committee adopted the long-range program with financial programs to support each of them. While many of the scheduled projects were set up on a pay-as-you-go basis through current municipal revenues, others were to be financed with bond issues to be approved by the citizens. The studies and recommendations of the citizen committee were extensively used to educate the community as to the need for the bonds.

### Creation and Operation of the Committee

When a problem is referred to a committee, the city must assume the responsibility of properly setting the committee in motion to insure that it has every opportunity to arrive at a prompt, intelligent decision that is in the best interests of the community. While this does not mean that municipal officials are to dictate a course of action to the committee, it does imply that the city is to establish guides for its creation, organization, and operation.

Appointment. Citizen advisory committees are usually appointed by the mayor or the city council. This reflects the fact that such committees are most often concerned with the formulation of policy rather than administrative decisions.

The resolution creating the committee should include statements as to: (1) its nature and purpose, (2) its composition, (3) the amount of appropriations and staff aid to be made available, and (4) a target date for completion of the assignment. It is also desirable for the appointing authority to name the committee members and appoint the chairman at this time.

The statement of the nature and purpose of the committee necessarily need not be exhaustive but should clearly outline the limitations and scope of the authority and responsibility of the committee and carefully delineate the specific problem assigned. This should be followed up in the organizational stage of the committee with more detailed background information and an explanation of the technical, legal, and financial aspects of the problem.

Committee Composition. Two factors are important in providing for the composition of the citizen committee: (1) number of members, and (2) adequate representation of a cross section of interests in the community.

The size of the committee, according to most cities, will be determined by the nature and scope of the problem. Although the size of the committees appointed by the reporting cities ranged from 3 to 250, cities generally agreed that smaller committees tend to meet with more success. From five to seven members were preferred for the committee whose function is purely advisory. Cities using the committee as a public relations device appointed larger committees which were often divided into subcommittees for practical working purposes. Some of the cities appointing larger committees for public relation purposes were: Boulder, Colo., 20 members; San Jose, Calif., 30 members; Ocala, Fla., 65 members; and Lubbock, Tex., 250 members.

San Diego, Calif. (434,924), uses the following formula to determine the size of committees: If the committee is appointed to study a specific problem, it is composed of approximately five members. If its purpose is to foster community understanding, however, the committee will average between 15 and 20 members.



Small committees are desirable for study purposes since a large committee frequently founders on minor details and is unable to reach agreement on the major elements of a problem. There is also the factor that by multiplying personal relationships the possibility of personal animosity and misunderstanding is increased. In Cincinnati, Ohio, a 10-member committee, appointed to study gas and electric utility problems, split over the final recommendations to the city council, with only five members of the committee concurring in the final recommendations. No further action on the problem was taken by the city.

The manner in which the city provides for adequate representation of various groups and interests within the community will be reflected in the ultimate value of the committee to the city. Too often cities rely on the same group of citizens for committee service and neglect other important interests. The general tendency to make "prestige" appointments does not necessarily provide for a representative committee.

Care should be taken to appoint only interested persons who can view programs and problems in an objective light. The committee should include neither malcontents who would turn their committee assignment into personal gain or political advantage, nor those who would support the city through right or wrong. The latter person can be as harmful as the former because the committee recommendations may suffer from the charge that the city packed the committee with only those who would support its views and programs.

One city official who experienced poor results with the use of an advisory committee, felt that the composition of the committee contributed to its failure. He states, "Put more emphasis on making committee appointments which truly represent a cross section of the entire community, rather than being too much concerned with selecting people believed to be in sympathy with the views of the city government. While some of the best brains in the community will be found in the so-called businessmen's group, it is probable that dominance by this group will result in a lack of confidence on the part of other interest groups in the city."

Staff Aid and Appropriations for Consultants. A committee can carry out its assignment only if the city provides it with adequate opportunity to learn and study the various implications of a problem. A citizen committee is not equipped to conduct research. The city must provide the committee with personnel who will do research for the committee and present it with factual information required for an intelligent decision. Failure to do so can result in committee recommendations based on opinions rather than facts.

Such a committee may recommend an impractical solution, inconsistent with the general aims of the administration. In one city a citizen financial committee was appointed to aid in the preparation of the budget with the objective of pointing out the great need of the city for additional funds. Some conservative bankers and accountants dominated the committee which was not provided the means of obtaining needed information, and its report not only recommended against all increases in taxes but also suggested the city cut services. These recommendations created an embarrassing situation for both the council and the city manager who felt that these measures would not be in the interests of the community. This city might have had more success if the committee had been asked to analyze the need for additional city services rather than revenues.

Two methods can be used to provide the committee with staff facilities: (1) administrative officials can serve in an advisory capacity to the committee and



do the necessary research, and (2) the city can appropriate funds to provide the committee with outside consultants. Some cities have used both of these methods.

The staff aid provided by cities is of two types: (1) secretarial and duplicating services, and (2) background information and technical advice provided by city officials. The officials most often mentioned as providing technical information to committees are the city manager, city engineer, planning director, and city attorney. These officials can supply a committee with the information needed to appreciate the significance and implications of the problem. Appropriations are less likely to be needed for committee work if cities provide a maximum of staff aid.

A smaller city not able to afford an appropriation can provide valuable technical advice to committees through the administrative staff. In South Boston, Va., a small appropriation was made to procure the advice of outside consultants, but most of the staff work and information was provided by the town manager who worked closely with the committee. In Southern Pines, N. C., the town attorney was assigned to work with the committee appointed to study the possibility of revising the town code.

Cities which place all the technical knowledge available within their organization at the disposal of the committee aid the committee in successfully carrying out its assignment. Technical advice and information can be provided by making administration officials available to the committee at all times. City administrative officers should never be voting members of such committees, since its recommendations will carry more weight where they are known to be committee rather than administration decisions.

Appropriations for outside consultants are usually made when the particular research cannot be provided by administrative officials due to its technical nature or the time required. A disadvantage of calling in consultants to work with a committee is the tendency to prolong the committee work. When a problem appears to be of such a nature that consultants will be required, the better practice is to have the consultants do their work prior to the appointment of a committee.

Hartford, Conn., appropriated \$12,000 to provide a staff and consultant for the advisory committee studying the future development of the city airport and other areas. Appropriations in other cities have also been made to secure engineering studies for citizen committees studying public improvement programs. Whittier, Calif., appropriated \$3,000 to provide a consultant from a private law firm to aid in the work of the citizen committee studying possible charter revision. Cincinnati, Ohio, also appropriated \$1,500 for a citizen charter amendment committee to pay the salary of a secretary and other expenses connected with the study.

"Temporary" Committees. One city manager stated, "Many of the dangers of citizen advisory committees are veiled by the word temporary." The term temporary may be misleading since a great variation was reported in the length of time that special committees served in different cities. In one city the committee met on only one occasion while in some cases committees served well over two years. The majority of the cities, however, reported that committees existed for only a few months.

Generally speaking the length of existence of a committee will be determined by the scope and complexities of the problem which it is assigned to study. Appointments which are too indefinite, however, tend to destroy the "temporary" characteristic of the special committee, increase the possibility of procrastination, and



prolong the arrival at a solution of the problem. For these reasons most cities recommend that a target date be set for the completion of the committee work. Although it may be impossible to determine how long an assignment will require, the committee should be put on notice that it is expected to complete its work as speedily as possible.

Resolutions creating citizen committees in Cincinnati, employed different methods to determine the date for completion of committee work. A committee was appointed in May of one year to study possible charter amendments and report back in ample time to present them to the voters an election the following November. The periods of existence of two other committees were set by a specific date and requiring a report "within six months from the passage of this resolution."

The scheduling of regular meetings and the appointment of a forceful leader as chairman can also prevent committees from prolonging their work.

Press Relations. It is desirable to centralize press relations of citizen committees in the office of the chief administrator. The question as to whether or not the press should be represented at committee meetings will be answered in many instances by the attitude of the press towards the existing administration. Certainly a committee whose objective is to acquaint the community with problems and obtain public support will welcome the opportunity to disseminate information through the press and other media. The educational functions of citizen committees are intimately connected with the use of all means of communication.

By accurately reporting the findings of a committee, the press plays an important role in acquainting the community with the specific problem, and conditions its readers for the committee recommendations and city action. The problem of premature press relations and misinterpretation of committee action by reporters may present itself. This can largely be eliminated if city administrative officials aid in interpreting committee findings and recommendations to the press, and if the committee is instructed to clear all press release through the office of the chief administrator.

Committee Reports. Committees in all but one city submitted final reports with recommendations. In all instances their reports were submitted to the appointing authority and copies of the report were made available for distribution to the public through the newspapers or radio.

Committee reports are generally duplicated and placed in binders in a sufficient number to be distributed to city council members and other municipal officials. Reports are either reproduced by city employees or by outside firms with funds provided by the city for the purpose.

The reports of some committees are submitted in typewritten memoranda or letter form. In Hartford, Conn., the committee studying the future development of the city airport and another area was required to submit only periodic memoranda reporting the recommendations on each phase of the study.

#### Recognition of Committee Members

Citizens who serve on advisory committees often do not receive adequate recognition for their contributions to the community and city government. Municipal officials should endeavor to acknowledge the work of these unpaid citizens.



Riverside, Calif., made frequent use of key slogans such as "City Beautiful" or "The Riverside Plan" to call attention to the work of citizen committees developing capital improvement programs. The majority of the cities also recommended that the more important or final committee report be presented at a regular council meeting and that the appointing authority should discharge the committee at that time with the commendations of the city.

The appointing authority may also want to send each committee member a personal letter thanking him for his service. Beverly Hills, Calif., goes one step further and awards each committee member a certificate for service at a formal ceremony.

The advantage to the city of according citizens due recognition for their service on advisory committees should not be underestimated. There is less likelihood for a committee member to become disgruntled if he is adequately rewarded for his work even though that reward is intangible. By making a committee member feel that he has played an important role in his city government, the city is improving its public relations. The individual committee member can become an important factor in obtaining citizen support for the actions of the city council or the administrator.

### Conclusion

1. Cities should use the citizen advisory committee sparingly, restricting it for use when the regular officials require technical advice or desire to obtain or promote "grass roots" sentiment.

2. A citizen committee may be appointed either as a fact-finding study group to recommend a solution to the appointing authority or for use as a public relations device to gain citizen support for projects or programs. A citizen committee should never be appointed to study a problem for which the appointing authority has already determined its course of action.

3. The mayor or city council should appoint both the committee and the chairman. Municipal officials should not be included on the committee as voting members.

4. The resolution creating the committee should include: (1) a statement of the nature and purpose of the committee; (2) composition of the committee; (3) the amount of appropriations and staff aid to be made available; and (4) a target date for completion of the assignment.

5. From five to seven members may be sufficient for a fact-finding committee, while committees with public relations purposes may be larger to include a representative cross section of interests in the community.

6. Technical aid must be made available to the committee to insure that its recommendations are based on fact rather than opinion. This aid can be provided by appropriations for outside consultants or by administrative officials who meet with the committee to provide information and advice.

7. Representatives of the press should be present at each meeting to facilitate the circulation of information concerning committee work in the community. City officials should aid reporters in interpreting committee findings. All committee press releases should be cleared through the office of the chief administrator.



8. The committee should be required to submit a written final report in a form suitable to the nature of the problem studied. The city should provide personnel or funds to aid in the preparation and reproduction of the report.

9. When the committee is disbanded the city should accord recognition to committee members for their service. This may be done through personal letters from the appointing authority or through the award of service certificates at a public ceremony, or both.

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## APPENDIX

### Citizen Advisory Committees in 26 Cities

This is a list of citizen advisory committees appointed in 26 cities, showing the name of the committee and the purpose of creating it if not indicated by the name. Resolutions creating committees, and final committee reports, are available on loan from Management Information Service for the committees designated by asterisks.

#### Beverly Hills, Calif.

Boulevard Planting Committee (Recommend means of improving beautification along major thoroughfares).

Oil Development Committee (Advise city council upon method to control oil development within city).

Civic Center Development Committee (Study and recommend the development of a recently purchased site adjacent to existing civic center area).

Public Relations Committee (Advise council on improving public relations).

Recreation and Youth Activities Committee (Study and recommend improvements in recreation facilities and programs).

Business Street Parking Committee (Advise on improving on-street parking).

Triangle Off-Street Parking Committee (Consider means of providing additional off-street parking in the business area).

Street Lighting Committee (Obtain citizen approval of a modern street lighting program).

Executive Committee (Coordinate activities of all the committees studying street improvements, and traffic and parking problems).

Note: Beverly Hills also appointed eight other committees to advise on beautification projects, street improvements, traffic and parking.

#### Riverside, Calif.

Civic Center; Public Works; Public Health and Safety; Public Utilities; Parking and Transportation; Airport; and Parks, Trees and Recreation Committees. (Develop long-range capital improvement programs, priorities, and methods of financing).



San Diego, Calif.

- Civic Auditorium Committee (Survey possible auditorium sites).\*
- Charter Review Committee (Study and make recommendations on amending the city charter).\*
- Committee of Fifty (Advise mayor and council on matters of community-wide interest).
- Mission Bay Development (Advise city manager).
- Water Recreation Committee (Study problems and develop long-range plans relating to recreation on city lakes).
- Build San Diego Better Committee (Recommend programs to cure and prevent blight).

San Jose, Calif.

- Police Advisory Committee (Foster a closer relationship between the police department and public).

Santa Rosa, Calif.

- Off-Street Parking Committee.
- Earthquake Damage Prevention Advisory Committee.
- Advisory Committee on Proposed Municipal Golf Course.
- Advisory Committee to Study City Hall Space Needs (Determine whether new city hall was needed).

Whittier, Calif.

- Charter Advisory Committee (Draft a proposed city charter).
- Civic Center Site Committee

Boulder, Colo.

- Citizen's Capital Improvement Committee (Study capital improvement needs of the city).
- Citizen's Committee for Water Bonds (Help sell the community on needs of the water utility).

Hartford, Conn.

- Waste Collection Public Relations Committee (Assist in formulating an education program for a new waste collection system).
- Committee on the Development of North and South Meadows (Study the possible development of that area and the future use of the city airport).

Ocala, Fla.

- The Greater Ocala Committee (Review needs and recommend a program of public improvements).\*

Albany, Ga.

- Citizen Committee to Investigate City Boards.



Worcester, Mass.

Committee to Screen Candidates for City Purchasing Agent.  
Committee to Advise on Feasibility of Machine Accounting.

Berkley, Mich.

Sewer Advisory Committee (Work with consulting engineers to recommend program to improve sewers).

Clawson, Mich.

Mayor's Charter Study Committee (Recommend possible charter revision).  
Mayor's Beautification Committee (Recommend beautification projects).

Flint, Mich.

Mayor's Fact Finding Committee (Develop a capital improvement program).  
Hospital Study Committee (Investigate hospital operations).  
City Hall Committee (Advise and direct program for new city hall).  
Housing Study Committee (Devise program to clean up blighted areas).

Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.

Rat Extermination and Control Committee.  
Drainage Committee.

Southern Pines, N. C.

Civic Center Committee (Recommend a central location).  
Citizen Town Code Committee (Modernize code and town charter).

Cincinnati, Ohio

Committee to study advisability of recommending to Council possible amendments to the city charter.\*

Commission to analyze operations and finances of The Cincinnati Gas & Electric Company (Advise on gas and electricity rates).\*

Citizen Advisory Committee on Rents (Recommend whether rent control should be terminated or extended).\*

Central Riverfront Advisory Committee (Determine whether changes should be made in the master plan for the area).

Baker, Ore.

Street Improvement Advisory Committee (Recommend program and manner of financing).

The Dalles, Ore.

Citizen's Committee on Peddler's Ordinance (Prepare an outline of an ordinance licensing and regulating peddlers, itinerant merchants, and canvassers).

Committee on Feeding of Indigent Men.

Columbia, S. C.

Committee on Sub-Standard Housing (Study need, prepare and recommend an ordinance).



Rabies Control Committee (Recommend a solution to the problem).

Public Improvement Bond Program Committee (Obtain the required 7,000 signatures to place the proposal on the ballot).

Committee on Water Plant Improvements (Advise council whether to proceed with program financed by increase in water rates).

Committee on Business License Adjustments (Work with city manager in establishing new business license rates).

Committee on Little League Baseball. (Alleviate complaints from citizens residing near ball park).

#### Lubbock, Tex.

Citizen's Bond Issue Committee (Study the need for \$6,000,000 public works' bond issue).

City-County Welfare Committee (Study city-county welfare needs).

#### Alexandria, Va.

Citizens' Advisory Survey Commission (Study governmental survey findings and recommend specific improvements).

Citizens' Advisory Tax Commission (Study tax system and revenue needs).\*

Building Code Advisory Committee (Draft a revised building code).

Advisory Committee for New Gymnasium-Auditorium (Formulate plans for construction of gymnasium-auditorium).

Charter Commission (Draft a new city charter).

#### Arlington County, Va.

Interim Legislation Committee (Advise county board on suggested state legislation).

Interim Budget Committee (Advise county board on manager's budget).

Interim Building Code Committee (Reconcile divergent views of builders, administrative departments and legal advisors, and recommend code to the county board).

Interim Committee on Home for Aged Indigent (Study the question of establishing a home).

Interim Potomac River Bridge Committee (Study the various proposals for bridges and advise county board on best proposals).

Study Committee on Incorporation (Study incorporation for the county and advise board).

Regional Committee on Juvenile Detention Facilities (Study the question of establishment of a juvenile detention home).

#### South Boston, Va.

Advisory Citizen Committee on Sanitary Sewer Construction Policy (Study method to finance installation).

#### Vancouver, Wash.

Mayor's Advisory Board on Housing (Advise the city council on matters pertaining to the housing authority).

Fact-Finding Commission on Airport (Get facts concerning airport troubles).

#### Watertown, Wis.

Sewage Disposal Plant (Interview and recommend firm of engineers to design new plant).

Band Shell Committee (Select site and design for band shell).



